

Fulbright Vows Support to JFK

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Staff Reporters

Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday visited the President to tell Mr. Kennedy he still supports him despite misgivings about Administration policy on Cuba and Laos.

What particularly provoked Fulbright and caused him to ask for the White House appointment was a New York Herald Tribune story yesterday which carried this headline across the top of Page One: "Why Fulbright's Glaring at the White House—and a Cuban Secret."

A subhead said: "Why Fulbright's in a Rage."

"I am not in a rage and I am not glaring at the White House," the Senator said after his visit.

He said he was trying to speak objectively about critical problems in his capacity as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

"It is disturbing that one cannot be objective in his comment on serious matters without the press saying he is trying to start a fight," Fulbright said. He declared that some stories were "the figment of the imagination of the more imaginative press people."

The flare-up began Sunday when Fulbright said on NBC's "Meet the Press" program that he was opposed to sending American troops into Laos and that the Cuban invasion attempt had resulted in a loss of American prestige.

The Herald Tribune story, written by Rowland Evans Jr., said that Fulbright on April 4 "made a passionate appeal, in what now turns out to have been a decisive top-level conference, flatly opposing the projected operation against Castro government."

In talking to reporters at the White House, Fulbright declined to comment on his role in the Cuban affair. But it has been well known here from other sources that Fulbright strongly advised the President against permitting the landings.

Fulbright said he tried to make it clear to the President yesterday—"and I think now he does understand"—that the statements Sunday were made as a Senator who believed he had a responsibility to speak frankly on foreign policy matters.

He and the President "fundamental agreement on basic principles, t"

said, adding that he thought Mr. Kennedy would go down in history as a great President. But he said he did not agree in every detail on every Administration policy.

"I think the country should recognize the necessity of the people supporting the President in these difficult times," Fulbright went on, but he said he thought he was obliged to express differences when he thought it advisable.

Asked if he would support military intervention in South Viet-Nam and Thailand if the President ordered it, Fulbright said he would if those countries asked our support and were willing to make a strong fight. He said Laos was an exception because of its terrain and because the Laotians are apathetic in the struggle.

"We've done more than our share in Laos," he said.

The principal responsibility in Southeast Asia must rest with the people themselves and with India and Japan, the Senator explained. Southeast Asia is not an area of "primary" American responsibility, he said.

The President discussed with him alternatives in South-east Asia, Fulbright said, and he promised his support in the short run. He said he wanted to know more precisely what the Administration has in mind in the long run.